

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC  
800 AM EDT WED MAR 07 2012

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SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN NORTH CAROLINA  
MARCH 04 - MARCH 10  
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This week has been declared North Carolina Severe Weather Awareness Week for 2012.

Tornadoes are one of nature's most violent phenomena. The peak tornado season in North Carolina occurs in the months of March, April, and May. However, tornadoes have touched down in all months.

...North Carolina Tornado History...

Violent tornadoes with winds in excess of 150 mph have struck the area as early as March and as late as November. The worst tornado outbreak in North Carolina history occurred just last year on April 16, 2011, when 30 confirmed tornadoes occurred. A total of 24 individuals lost their lives in North Carolina with thirteen tornadoes classified as strong, some hitting highly-populated areas. In addition, there were a total of 304 injuries reported in central North Carolina alone, but the actual number for the state is likely much higher. Total structural damage in central North Carolina was estimated at greater than 328 million dollars.

Tornadoes can occur any month of the year in North Carolina, including cool season tornadoes like the one that touched down in Davidson and Randolph counties this past November 16, and the tornado touchdowns in Rutherford, Burke, and Caldwell counties just a few weeks ago on January 11, 2012.

...Tornado Dangers...

A study of tornadoes found that North Carolina was ranked first in the nation with the greatest percentage of people killed by night time tornadoes. Of all the tornado fatalities since 1950, eighty-two percent of tornado fatalities in North Carolina have occurred at night. Compare this with the fact that only about twenty-eight percent of all tornadoes actually touch down at night. A potential reason for the high night time fatality rates in comparison to high-risk areas like tornado alley could be the prevalence of night time tornadoes in March, May and November. The stronger tornadoes tend to strike during these months in the late evening to overnight hours.

Tornadoes also are difficult to visually identify at night by both the public and trained spotters. Even when warnings are provided at night, people asleep at home are less likely to hear those warnings. In addition, most housing ranging from mobile homes to brick homes where people eat, sleep, and live are more vulnerable to tornadoes in comparison to safer locations such as schools and many businesses which are heavier

buildings consisting of reinforced concrete. Whether at home or work remember when proper planning and action come together lives are saved.

#### ...Tornado Safety...

Most tornado deaths and injuries across the state occur outdoors, in automobiles, and mobile homes. Nearly two thirds of all tornado fatalities occur in mobile homes and many of these at night. When a tornado warning is issued for your area or if you spot a tornado, seek shelter in a substantial building. The safest place is in an interior bathroom or closet. Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Stay away from windows as debris picked up by a tornado can easily shatter a window and enter your house.

If you are caught outdoors, seek shelter in a low spot like a ditch or culvert. You want to get as low as possible to protect yourself from the flying debris in a tornado. The debris within the tornado is what causes nearly all of the injuries and deaths. If in your car and threatened by a tornado, abandon your vehicle and seek shelter in a substantial structure or in a ditch. Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle. Tornadoes do not travel in straight lines and it can be very difficult to determine what direction the tornado is moving.

Also never seek shelter from a tornado under an overpass. There is no safe place under an overpass. In fact seeking shelter under an overpass puts you more at risk from violent winds and flying debris.

The National Weather Service will issue tornado watches when conditions are favorable for thunderstorms to produce tornadoes. Once a tornado is spotted or detected by radar, the National Weather Service will issue a tornado warning. Any time a tornado warning is issued for your area, take action to protect your life as well as the lives of your family. The action you take in the minutes and seconds before a tornado strikes is what save lives.

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#### Related Websites...

Thunderstorms and Tornadoes... [http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream//tstorms/tstorms\\_intro.htm](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream//tstorms/tstorms_intro.htm)

North Carolina tornado climatology... <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/climo/online/rda/RAX.html>

U.S. tornado climatology and past tracks... <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/wcm/>

SKYWARN... <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/rah/skywarn/>